

# WALKING AND TOURISM MOBILITIES THROUGH A GENDERED LENS

Myrto Barmpouza, and Chiara Rabbiosi

## ABSTRACT

By exploring recent advancements in Tourism, Mobilities, and Gender Studies, this chapter considers walking tourism in order to advance knowledge of the differentials that inform mobility patterns. Walking tourism is built around long-distance walks to explore spaces, places, and landscapes, and has been significantly commoditised in the Global North in the last decade. While perspectives on walking tourism have been varied, the majority tend to present the nexus between walking and tourism as convivial, easily embodied, and socially inclusive. We contend that a more nuanced account of walking tourism is needed. To this end, we present findings from an exploratory mixed methods study conducted over the summer of 2021 in Italy, with the aim of investigating the practices and choices made regarding walking trips as experienced by those in different gender categories. Our results show that those who identify as women are more sensitive to how their gender may have constrained their walking holiday, resulting in a series of embodied and spatial safeguarding strategies. In conclusion, we suggest the importance of expanding qualitative research on walking tourism to explore femininities, masculinities, and queer identities, while also adopting intersectional and critical disability perspectives.

## KEYWORDS

Walking Tourism, Gender Studies, Feminine Identities, Mixed Methods, Italy

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## Introduction

Walking is one of the most common transport methods in the context of tourism. It is also a form of mobility that is spatially situated and historically gendered. In this chapter, we present a piece of exploratory research on a tourism niche focused around long-distance walks to explore spaces, places, and landscapes – that is, walking tourism. In particular, the study we will be presenting<sup>1</sup> is situated within a broader interest in approaching tourism through a gendered lens that has flourished in the last three decades (Aitchison, 2009; Gibson, 2001; Porter & Schänzel, 2018; Porter, Schänzel & Cheer, 2021; Pritchard, 2014; Thurnell-Read & Casey, 2015). Contemporary Tourism Studies consider tourists' motivations, gazes, and embodied performances, acknowledging gender and sexual pluralities in line with the diverse waves through which feminist thinking has advanced Gender Studies (Johnston, 2005; Ren, 2021; Veijola & Jokinen, 1994; Waitt, 2012).

The recent rise of discourse on walking tourism (see, for instance, Unwto, 2019), including academic discourse (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010b; Munar, Meged, Bødker, & Wiedemann, 2021; Rabbiosi, 2021; Scriven, 2021) often avoids problematising the topic from a gendered perspective. In the piece of research this article draws from, the aim is to explore the constraints affecting walking tourism in relation to how they are perceived by femininities in particular. To achieve this, we rely on a mixed methods research to answer the following questions: What are the choices made and the practices adopted by different gender categories when it comes to walking tourism? Is there a difference between how different constraining factors are perceived by different gender categories? How is gender identity thematised by walking tourists in terms of the way identifying as a woman might affect the practices adopted during a walking tourism trip? By answering these questions, we will fill a gap in research on walking tourism, which generally reduces this kind of tourist performance to a socially and physically de-differentiated task.

This chapter will proceed as follows. In the literature review section, we will consider walking as a specific form of mobility, and of tourism mobility more specifically, while also providing a specific focus on feminine patterns of walking and tourism. We will then discuss the methodology used in the research presented, including details on the specific case study, how the 'gender variable' was considered in the research, and the overall validity of the research. We will present some of the findings from our research, specifically regarding the constraints, safeguarding strategies, and restricted space, time, and options suggested mostly by those who identified as women. Lastly, we will discuss our findings in line with the aims and scope of this chapter, prior to moving on to the conclusions where we stress the limitations of our exploratory research and suggest that intersectionality be at the core of future research agendas.

## Literature Review

### *Walking as a Form of Mobility*

In the context of Western societies, walking stopped being a mode of long-distance transportation in the 19th century (Pooley, 2017). Early contemporary studies on walking emerged within transport geography and were aimed at informing pedestrian policies (Middleton, 2011). In this vein, data addressing the frequency of walking, or the routes walked,

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<sup>1</sup> Myrto Barmpouza is the authoress of Sects. 2, 3 and 4; Chiara Rabbiosi is the authoress of Sects. 1 and 5.

were examined, but the meanings of journeys made on foot, or the variety of ways of walking that exist, were overlooked (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008). In addition, and despite what is generally acknowledged, walking is not necessarily a convivial, automatically embodied, inclusive, and de-politicised act (Springgay & Truman, 2019).

Walking can be most clearly understood in the context of the so-called mobilities turn in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSHs), which emerged in the 2000s (Sheller & Urry, 2006). This approach has driven the understanding of mobilities as embodied, the recognition of their spatial entanglements, and their interconnection with other mobilities, such as migratory, labour, tourism, and others that are so blurred as to not be easily distinguished from one another (Sheller, 2021). Crucially, the mobilities turn emphasises how important it is to understand mobilities as the sum of physical movements, practices of mobility, and representations and meanings within a specific spacetime (Cresswell T., 2006, 2010). This means that walking is always informed by various performative norms and values, which produce distinct practices and dispositions (Edensor, 2000).

In sum, walking articulates a relationship between the walking subject and place (Rabbiosi, 2021), involving a complex layering of material organisation and the shape of the landscape with symbolic meaning, and an ongoing sensual perception that is associated with the embodied experience of moving through space (Wylie, 2005).

### *Walking Tourism: Definitions*

Some studies hold that people tend to walk more as tourists than in their everyday lives (Hall, Ram & Shoal, 2018). For instance, tourist destinations can be readily explored by walking, strolling around, and experiencing places through all of the senses, which in turn facilitates spatial engagement (Farkic, Peric, Lesjak, & Petelin, 2015; Hannam, Butler, Witte, & Zuev, 2021). Walking tourism is a more specific label used to identify tourist experiences whose main appeal lies in the possibility to walk for an extended time or distance (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010b).

Walking tourism has become increasingly popular in the second decade of the 2000s, as reflected in the growing investment in infrastructure to support thematised trails (Unwto, 2019). While no strict definition of walking tourism exists, it may be understood with reference to a renewed interest in so-called active holidays, namely holidays that incorporate sport and/or outdoor activities (Olafsdottir, 2013; Weber, 2001). Another notable element to consider in this context is the success, both in terms of promotion and practice, of former or newly identified pilgrimage routes (Munar et al., 2021; Scriven, 2021), sometimes actualised under a post-secular understanding of spirituality (Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2018). Most recently, the Covid-19 global pandemic may also have redirected tourists toward walking. In that context, walking served as an accessible form of mobility, mitigating mental and physical distress at a time characterised by emotional charge and limited movement. In addition, as walking routes generally allow people to escape more crowded destinations, they may also have fulfilled the demand for some tourists to investigate healthier and safer places to visit (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021).

In the vein of the already mentioned mobilities turn in the SSHs, Hannam and Roy (2013) have challenged understandings of tourism as a phenomenon in which subjects are perpetually moving, following one linear mobility pattern, and not engaging with places. While it is clear that walking tourism can be perceived as a form of tourism that involves a great deal of physical movement, they also included being in place and scattered movement patterns, as Rabbiosi (2021) has also demonstrated.

### *Feminine Patterns of Walking and Tourism*

Women have historically been limited with respect to when, where, and under what terms they can walk due to social, cultural, and physical restrictions (Männistö-Funk, 2021). Modern society has spatialised gender roles by associating women with a reproductive role and men with a productive one; this division has been reinforced by the spaces that have been produced, encouraging men to use public spaces and women to remain at home (Massey, 1994). Consequently, women have often been represented as lacking a ‘mobile subjectivity’, as they have been rooted in place and home, while narratives of the masculine have often hinged on travel (Sheller, 2016).

Since the 1990s, increased access to tourism by women has resulted in a redefinition of Tourism Studies, which have begun to integrate feminist perspectives (Pritchard, 2014). Tourist spaces are now understood to be the result of many different constraints and power agencies. For instance, physical appearance can be rendered as a significant mediating factor of the tourist experience for women. For example, feeling that they attract more attention from men can put women in a position of feeling vulnerable (Seow & Brown, 2018; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2018). Indirect consequences of the above processes are the development of strategies used by women to ensure safety, such as not going out alone, altering the way they dress, limiting themselves to moving around during certain time periods and/or avoiding certain activities (Brown, de Coteau & Lavrushkina, 2020; Brown & Osman, 2017).

Sociocultural, personal, practical, and spatial constraints seem to characterise women’s travel. Sociocultural constraints may be conceptualised as originating from both the sociocultural frameworks that women come from and travel to, such as, for example, their roles in society or the perceptions of others with regard to them travelling alone. Personal constraints, on the other hand, describe more internally induced restrictive factors, such as emotions, beliefs, and self-perceptions, which might take the shape of vulnerability, fear, self-doubt, and so on. Practical constraints, as the term suggests, may relate to lack of funds, time, knowledge of a place, or even wariness of travelling alone (Wilson & Little, 2008).

Despite the constraints on women’s travel, recent research shows that women enjoy many benefits by engaging in it. Specifically, tourist experiences have been associated with relaxation, education, and social interaction, as well as with self-empowerment processes, such as self-discovery, and acquiring a sense of autonomy and authenticity in terms of one’s existence. For instance, female walking tourists interviewed by Brown et al. (2020) reported that walking helped them to clear their mind, attune with nature, explore and negotiate space, and improve their physical health. However, they also mentioned feelings of vulnerability that for them were connected to their gender. This insecurity was often accompanied by increased alertness as well as the adoption of safeguarding techniques.

Thus, from the analysis of literature on mobilities, tourism, and walking, it has emerged that walking tourism may be significantly affected by gender-related mobility differentials, resulting in a continuous negotiation of the route to take, the speed to move, the way to appear while on the move, and, therefore, a continuous negotiation between affections and perceptions concerning the space walked.

## Methodology

### *Area Selection*

As the topic under investigation can be wide and differ from place to place, a specific locus in which the research would be conducted had to be decided, and this was Italy. Walking tourism has been incentivised by policymakers in Italy the recent years. The Strategic Plan for Development of Tourism 2017–2022 (Mibact, 2016) specifically mentions walking routes as strategic tools to implement sustainable and cultural tourism, with explicit reference to so-called inner areas (peripheral areas, often rural or mountainous). In addition, walking tourism is increasingly engaged in the country. According to a survey conducted by Terre di Mezzo, the number of people walking Italy's longer walking routes (such as the Via Francigena) has risen steadily from 2016 to 2019 (Terre di Mezzo Editore, 2020). The numbers decreased to 2018 values in 2020 because of the limitations on mobility due to the global pandemic, but rose again in 2021 (Terre di Mezzo Editore, 2022).

While the Terre di Mezzo survey provides a good reference point for our study, it does not explore the phenomenon from a gendered perspective. However, a National Network for Walking Women (Rete Nazionale Donne in Cammino) was established in 2019 attracting significant attention from the media and demonstrating the interest in walking tourism from a variety of femininities. At the time of writing, the network's Facebook group comprises approximately 85,000 members.

Considering the attention on walking tourism and gender-related patterns at the national scale on one hand, and the lack of research on the other, we mainly relied on literature to design our exploratory research.

### *Mixed Methods*

Because of the absence of empirical research on the topic we intended to study, our study followed a mixed methods, single phase, triangulation research design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). We designed an online questionnaire including category, list, and 5-point questions to collect socio-demographic information concerning our respondents, their general motivations for engaging in walking tourism,<sup>2</sup> and then how they perceived that their gender identity had influenced a variety of aspects concerning their walking tourism experience, including the choices made in terms of routes taken or company chosen for the trip. At the end of the survey, an open-ended question was also posed to allow respondents to freely expand on their answers with reference to their travel experience and the gender they identified with.

The questionnaire, written in Italian due to the area selected for administration, was tested by researchers with expertise in the fields of interest, as well as by non-specialists, in order to assess whether the questions we intended to ask were appropriate and easily understood by the respondents. The questionnaire was piloted twice before its final form was decided on.

Online questionnaires allow for the possibility to reach a significant number of potential respondents (Fricker, 2012). We decided to distribute the questionnaire via Facebook. A preliminary mapping of Facebook groups was implemented by using keywords related to

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<sup>2</sup> We do not use the results from the set of questions related to motivations, as the analysis of motivations exceeds the aims and scope of this chapter.

walking tourism in Italy. A list of 22 Facebook groups was created and a link to the questionnaire was posted on their pages with a short introduction. The questionnaire was open to self-administration during September of 2021.

Regarding the analysis of the collected data, the quantitative data were statistically analysed using R Studio (R Studio Team, 2022). Chi-square tests of independence were performed in order to identify any differences in the answers according to gender identity. In terms of the qualitative data, textual answers were gathered together and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied. It was through thematic analysis that we were able to discriminate constraints, safeguarding strategies, and restricted space, time, and options. Sequential transformative triangulation (Cresswell J.D. & Cresswell J.W., 2017) was used to integrate and interpret the results in a complementary fashion. The open answers were in Italian and were translated into English for the purpose of research dissemination.

### *The Gender Variable*

In our research, we considered gender as a social, and polysemic, construct (Butler, 1993). As a multidimensional concept, many different approaches have been used to better comprehend gender. For example, if gender roles are strictly connected to the gender binary, which is the enforced dyadic system of male and female gender identities, and the subsequent societal pressure to develop a sense of gender that is ‘compatible’ with assigned sex at birth, gender identity pertains instead to the internal understanding of individuals with regard to their self and gender; an understanding that is related to physical embodiment and may or may not be in accordance with the assigned sex at birth and the individual’s gender expression. Therefore, when asking about respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics, we allowed for a non-binary answer. The reason why we submitted our questionnaire without limiting it to a specific gender is that we aimed to achieve a pluralistic map. Besides femininities, we were open to understanding masculinities (Thurnell-Read & Casey, 2015) as well as queer identities in tourism (Ong, Vorobjovas-Pinta, & Lewis, 2022), and walking tourism more specifically. The final number of respondents was 215; 167 identified as women and 47 as men. There were also two respondents who identified as transgender men. Considering the imbalance in the gender identification of respondents, as they mostly identified as women, our research took on a specific feminine perspective, despite what we had originally planned.

## Findings

In line with the specific aim and scope of this chapter, in this section, we limit our discussion to the analysis of a portion of our dataset, in particular that revealing the perceptions of how gender influenced the travel choices and practices of those respondents who completed a trip or a journey on foot during summer 2021, which was 86% of all respondents. Among them, 150 identified as women and 35 identified as men. The set of questions we used for this study related to (a) choices made in terms of the trail or path chosen; (b) the company present while walking, (c) the place where the night was spent, (d) the time of day chosen to walk, and (e) the choice of dress while walking. Answers were collected using a 5-point Likert scale.

A descriptive analysis of the quantitative component of our study indicated that there are some differences that can be identified with respect to different gender categories, as shown in Table 1.1. For instance, 19.3% participants identifying as women considered that their gender identity influenced their decision to walk alone or with others, compared to just 8.6% of men; while 22% of participants identifying as women considered that their gender identity influenced their

decision about where they would spend the night, compared to 8.6% of men. However, we cannot state that, from a statistical point of view, there was a significant relationship between gender identity and the practices adopted while walking. As mentioned in the methodology section, Chi-square tests were applied to ascertain the existence of any relationships between gender identity and the associated practices and choices made, and revealed no correlation.<sup>3</sup>

The way the closed-ended questions were posed did not allow respondents to explain the specific meanings of their answers. For instance, when someone identifying as a woman agrees with the statement, “My gender identity influenced the choice of the trail/path I took”, this might mean that she took the safer path, but when a respondent identifying as a man gives the same answer, it could mean that he chose a more dangerous path in line with stereotypes of masculine virility. Thus, it is the qualitative part of our research that most illuminates the way walking trips and travels are mediated through gender identity, and so it is on the findings of this part that we will centre our analyses. The qualitative aspect of our research<sup>4</sup> was more effective in highlighting the perceptions of how gender had influenced the travel choices of our respondents, and consequently the constraints that women face when engaging in walking tourist travels, the safeguarding strategies women adopt, both before and while engaging in walking, and the temporal and spatial determinants that are considered as safe by and for women.

### *Constraints*

The main personal constraints mentioned by women engaging in walking trips or travel were awareness of fearing for their own safety, as well as feelings of vulnerability and vigilance about potential danger. Fear for safety appeared both as a pre-travel and during-travel constraint. Moreover, women mentioned that fear for one’s safety and, more specifically fear of being in receipt of violence or harassment, could be a limiting factor when undertaking a walking trip, especially when walking alone: “Traveling alone leads me to assess dangers that maybe, if I were a man, I wouldn’t calculate (e.g., assault, harassment)” (S, 21-30). Moreover, the fear for one’s safety was shown to persist, even when in the company of another woman, rendering granted that two women alone remain in danger: “I am a cisgender lesbian woman. I, also, go alone with my girlfriend on hikes with no problem, no fear, no worry. I don’t go alone with her to sleep in the woods in a tent. I always prefer other people to be there... I am afraid of violence. The woods, at night, is a space where only the trees might hear me calling for help... I feel more peaceful if it’s not just me and her” (G, 21-30). In the previous statement, it becomes apparent that this fear for safety can have restrictive effects on the choices women make when organizing certain elements of a walking trip, such as the overnight stay.

This state of fear, vulnerability and vigilance as a means to guarantee one’s safety seems to be present for women on walking trips, influencing their experience and conceptualization of walking and tourism. Feelings of fear were mentioned mainly in combination with walking alone and in desolate places: “I am a woman and have walked paths alone. Often there were desolated suburbs...or countryside for kilometres. At times I was scared. I thought...oh f\*ck... These are exactly the images you see on TV when they find mutilated bodies...” (B, 31-40).

Moreover, as mentioned above, vigilance with regard to preserving safety was also mentioned, specifically in relation to using the services offered during a walking trip: “I am very careful

<sup>3</sup> Chi-square tests were used to determine the existence of any relation among gender identity and respondents’ choices and practices ( $p = 0.0025$ , according to the Bonferroni correction for multiple testing).

<sup>4</sup> “Are there other aspects, not listed above, which in your opinion have characterised your walking experience from the gender identity you identify with?”

about the services offered, but this applies in general. For example (trivial? Maybe, but for me it is fundamental): The possibility of being able to make use of a safe bathroom along the route and also at the stops (I happened to stop at campsites)” (V, 31-40). Continuous assessment of safety with regard to the services offered, as mentioned by V., could be considered both as a cause and a result of vigilance; being attentive regarding the safety of services could result in a state of perpetual vigilance and vice versa, creating a vicious circle.

Interestingly, individuals identifying as men seemed to acknowledge these feelings of vigilance and distrust from women during walking trips, and even related this to their own gender identity: “My gender identity (straight male) caused distrust (to the female walkers) a few times when approaching other walkers (female) I met along the way” (A, 51-60). The words of A. suggest feelings of vulnerability and distrust between the genders, both of which are socially constructed. Nevertheless, in some cases women’s feelings of distrust towards men may have arisen originating from their own experiences around men in other spaces outside the domain of walking tourism, where they have experienced insecurity. Vigilance from women’s side can arise in simple encounters with men; this statement has a self-evident socio-cultural basis, as it implies the existence of gender stereotypes and power dynamics.

### *Safeguarding Strategies*

This category is not considered completely separate from constraints. On the contrary, the two themes of safeguarding strategies and constraints may overlap. Safeguarding strategies refer to the measures women may take to preserve their safety. The adoption of such strategies means that women are constantly encouraged to assess the level of safety of certain activities, places, time periods and even of other individuals. That being said, safeguarding is closely connected to the constraints they face, which usually occur as a response. Similar to these constraints, a distinction can be made between safeguarding strategies that are adopted before or during the preparation phase of the walking trip and during a walking trip per se. Certainly, the adoption of safeguarding strategies can affect how women experience and engage in walking travels.

The safeguarding that takes place during the preparation of a trip was mostly found to be about avoiding engaging into situations that are broadly considered unsafe for women. For example, L. mentions: “I decided to do this path with my boyfriend, so my choices were not affected by the fact that I was a woman. Surely, if I had done the path alone, I would have paid more attention to the choices, especially with regard to clothing, I would not have slept in a tent and I would have tried to avoid walking certain parts of the path completely alone and at night.” L.’s statement reveals that there is a number of decisions to make regarding various aspects of a walking trip (clothing, accommodation, walking hours), which would result in her taking steps to remain cautious if she had been taking the trip alone. It is worth mentioning that such safeguarding strategies seem to be almost reflexive for women, in the sense that, even when they do not necessarily consciously realize they are doing so, they tend to avoid certain situations as inherently unsafe for them: “I decided to walk in a group for the experience and to share it, but I would not say gender influenced my decisions. I also take walks alone, but in those cases only for one day and not staying overnight and I think this is due to gender” (C, 31-40). Shorter walking trips that do not include overnight stays are considered self-evidently preferable choice for women to keep themselves safe.

Other than avoidance as a safeguarding technique, from the above statements it is apparent that company is perceived as an indirect safeguarding measure. In particular, as suggested above, women feel safer when in the company of a man (usually partner) or in a larger group of walkers. Safety does not seem to be guaranteed when in the company of a woman: “Typically, we go to the mountains with a friend (male), or another couple, sleep outside... and we are



very attentive to observe the ground (for animal tracks, here mostly wild boar), before camping” (G, 21-30). Based on G.’s words it is evident that women, even in the company of one another are not safe, a statement that leaves no space for any factors other than gender identity (as well as what that entails) to be considered as the reason. Fear of violence, from both humans and animals, seems to be overlooked as a constraint when going on walking trips together with male friends or as a couple.

Finally, more active, in-situ safeguarding techniques have been adopted in order to preserve one’s safety, such as for example carrying a pepper spray when going on a walking trip alone in a desolate location: “...I had a pepper spray with me with three meters spraying function for the sprays but I often thought...oh...it’s windy...if an as\*hole has to attack I hope he does it from the right direction, if not I may even spray myself!” (B, 31-40). In contrast to going on walking trips with company or avoiding certain options, this type of safeguarding strategy seems to be accompanied by a persistent vigilant state that might affect the walking experiences of women, in terms of overall satisfaction.

### *Restricted Space, Time and Options*

The participants often drew a connection between the constraints they faced, and the safeguarding strategies they adopted, as well as the limited choices that resulted from ensuring safe places, times of day, services used, activities that they can engage in and practices they can follow in comparison to those individuals identifying as men. For example, responding to questions asked in the questionnaire, K. (31-40) mentioned that: “In other places and contexts, being a woman has certainly influenced me in my choices regarding hours of traveling, clothing, location of overnight stays, advising caution and, therefore, limiting my possibilities compared to a man”. This statement shows that women are confronted by restrictions on their freedom in the walking tourism space, and they often feel obliged to stick to this designated time-space sphere for their own benefit.

Moreover, other participants referred to the fact that being a woman had particularly discouraged them from walking alone, especially when embarking on walking trips in places far away from home of more than a day. Specifically, L. (31-40) notes: “I like to walk alone and explore places near home to get a break and I feel pretty safe. However, even though there is a desire to do multi-day walks, one of the factors that holds me back from undertaking them alone is related to my gender identity.” The limited choices that participants are left with in general when engaging in walking tourism as women were noted, as well: “...making more abstract reasoning, my identity could influence the choice (e.g., not choosing a hostel or not camping alone.” (N, 21-30). Hence, what this theme draws attention to is that the feelings of vulnerability, fear and vigilance that women experience in the space of walking tourism often result in an extreme curtailment of places, activities, situations and time zones that are considered safe for them. Moreover, the same feelings seem to reinforce their desire to stay within these designated lines to secure their safety.

## Discussion

Despite having also included some findings from walking tourists identifying as men, our results allow us to discuss walking tourism from a gendered perspective only from the point of view of femininities. Our results correspond with those reported in previous studies on travelling women’s walking trips and travels (Brown et al., 2020; Wilson & Little, 2008). In particular, fears about travelling alone, both before and during a trip, sometimes even

preventing female-identifying individuals from engaging in solo trips or travels, were brought up in our study, together with fears for one's security and physical integrity. With this regard, we should consider our analysis in light of fear for one's safety and feeling at risk in the public domain is ingrained in women from a young age by messages received from family, society, and the media.

Safeguarding strategies shall also be considered an indicator that women are actively negotiating access to and participation in walking travel, despite the constraints they face, as is also proven by their eager participation in it. Perceptions of women with regard to their safety are strictly dependent on their knowledge of a location and the social context and cues included in it. Thus, the walking tourism space in Italy, as an extension of public space, can be considered gendered as experienced by the participants in the discussed survey.

## Conclusion

### *Significance of Findings*

Even if the data generated from the quantitative and qualitative analyses seem to differ, as only the latter indicate that the walking tourism experience can be gendered, in some points they do converge. In particular, the tendency that was noted for respondents identifying as women to agree that their gender identity had influenced their choices on the company, the path walked, the overnight stay, and the hours during which they walked, seemed to accord with the safeguarding strategies that were reported. Thus, the tendency for women to be more influenced by their gender identity when making these choices, as suggested by the quantitative data, could be considered reinforced and elaborated on in the qualitative part of the analysis.

In the qualitative data, the themes that were revealed in women's answers were important in terms of providing a picture of how walking tourism is experienced in Italy. These themes are not completely new to the relevant literature as they have also been identified in previous research. The data generated by the current study, as well as the themes highlighted in the analysis, seem to closely coincide with those described by Wilson and Little (2008). They identified constraints as a theme from the data, mainly when the respondents had in mind travelling solo. In particular, fears about travelling alone, before and during a trip, sometimes even preventing female-identifying individuals to engage in solo travelling or walking, were mentioned in both cases, together with fears for one's security and physical integrity.

Overall, it can be said that the common theme of constraints emerging from research collecting the perceptions of walking tourists identifying as women, almost proves the existence of such constraints – despite their abstract nature. Furthermore, it indicates gender identity as their origin, as such constraints are experienced by individuals due to the fact that they identify as women; furthermore, the latter seem to perceive them as originating from this element of their identity.

### *Limitations*

In our study, we chose to initiate the research through a simple questionnaire that could easily be administered, in order to conduct a general exploration of the topic chosen. We wanted to consider gender as something not given, and plural. However, the significant majority of respondents identified as women. If our aim was to have a random sample in terms of gender, the result was a purposive sample. We consider that men are less open to problematising their

gender identity and, in fact, only recently has this issue been questioned in terms of tourism research (Porter et al., 2021). In addition, the questionnaire administered did not include questions regarding ethnic or economic identifiers. A third limitation of our study is that it arose from thoughts and concepts that reveal a Western perspective, where there is the relative privilege of conceptualising walking as a tourist activity. In this sense both the framework of this research and its results are socially and spatially situated and thus limited. A fourth limitation is that an ableist perspective may have implicitly influenced the study presented here, starting from the fact that physical impairments have not been put at the centre of our research design.

### *Future Research*

In order to obviate both the difficulty experienced by those with masculine identities to question themselves and to obtain solid data on transgender identities, we suggest that a deeper qualitative study should be undertaken focusing only on specific gender identities, to benefit feminine, masculine, and queer research in tourism. This will allow researchers to delve more fully into aspects that have not emerged through our survey, but that we consider potentially interesting to investigate. Considering social, economic, racial and ethnic, and physical variables will also help to provide a much-needed intersectional approach to tourism, merging with disability studies. Lastly, a third aspect that could be further advanced considers walking tourism from a labour perspective: as mentioned, walking tourism is an increasingly promoted niche in the tourism market. Considering how the gender dimension concerns the labour of walking tourism may also contribute to providing a fuller picture of the phenomenon.

Table 1.1 Perception of the influence of gender identity on walking tourism choices or practices (summer 2021). Answers were originally collected through a 5-points Likert scale

<b>How much do you agree with the following statements?</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Tot</b>
<i>a. My gender identity influenced the choice of the trail/path that I took.</i>				
Respondent identifying as W	(20) 13.3%	(118) 78.7%	(12) 8.0%	(150) 100%
Respondent identifying as M	(2) 5.7%	(29) 82.8%	(4) 11.4%	(35) 100%
<i>b. I decided to travel alone/in company with my gender identity in mind.</i>				
Respondent identifying as W	(29) 19.3%	(104) 69.3%	(17) 11.3%	(150) 100%
Respondent identifying as M	(3) 8.6%	(30) 85.7%	(2) 5.7%	(35) 100%
<i>c. I think the gender identity I identify with influenced my decision about the length of the trip.</i>				
Respondent identifying as W	(13) 8.6%	(133) 88.7%	(4) 2.7%	(150) 100%
Respondent identifying as M	(3) 8.6%	(30) 85.7%	(2) 5.7%	(35) 100%
<i>d. I made the decision about overnight accommodation taking my gender identity into account.</i>				
Respondent identifying as W	(33) 22.0%	(100) 66.7%	(17) 11.3%	(150) 100%
Respondent identifying as M	(3) 8.6%	(30) 85.7%	(2) 5.7%	(35) 100%
<i>e. The gender identity with which I identify influenced my choice of times of day during which I would walk.</i>				
Respondent identifying as W	(19) 6,7%	(121) 80,6%	(10) 12,7%	(150) 100%
Respondent identifying as M	(2) 14.3%	(28) 80%	(5) 5.8%	(35) 100%
<i>f. My gender identity influenced my decision on how I would dress during the walk.</i>				
Respondent identifying as W	(20) 16.0%	(115) 76.3%	(15) 7.6%	(150) 100%
Respondent identifying as M	(5) 10.7%	(26) 85.7%	(4) 3.6%	(35) 100%

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